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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 000868

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STATE FOR S/ES, NEA, NEA/IR, NEA/ARP
NSC FOR HADLEY
SECDEF OF OSD

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TAGS: PREL MNUC OPRC IR MU

SUBJECT: OMAN'S FM REPORTS INITIAL IRANIAN RESPONSE TO USG
INITIATIVE; MFA ISSUES STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

REF: A. MUSCAT 866

1B. SECSTATE 87682

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo. Reason: 1.4 (b, d).

Summary

11. (C) Omani FM Yusuf bin Alawi personally contacted Iranian Security Council Secretary Larijani and FM Mottaki in the hours following announcement of the USG initiative toward Iran. While Mottaki was tight-lipped, Larijani offered a negative reaction to the U.S. announcement, saying that it ignored clear Iranian conditions. Nevertheless, the Iranians indicated they will withhold formal reaction until after the June 1 Ministerial in Vienna. Bin Alawi suggested a slight softening of the USG proposal might win Iranian acceptance.
End summary.

Initial Iranian Reactions

12. (C) Following the Ambassador's ref A conversation May 31 with Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi regarding the USG initiative towards Iran (ref B), the Minister convoked the Ambassador shortly after midnight June 1 to report the results of his late-evening intercessions with Iranian FM Manouchehr Mottaki and Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani.

13. (C) Bin Alawi reported that he had first phoned FM Mottaki to urge Iran's positive consideration of the USG offer. He said it was immediately clear that Mottaki had not yet seen the full text of the Secretary's statement, and was awaiting formal notification by the Swiss Embassy before reacting. Mottaki was evasive and unsubstantive in his initial reactions to his Omani counterpart.

14. (C) Bin Alawi followed with a phone call to Ali Larijani, whom the Minister also thought had not yet seen the full text of the official USG proposal but who was aware of the broad outline. In contrast to Mottaki, Larijani was talkative yet "quite negative" in his initial reactions to the American offer. Per Bin Alawi, Larijani felt the USG proposal "ignores the political dimension of the issue. The Iranian people will not accept it." Larijani said he had been working tirelessly to make the Iranian position clear to the U.S., EU-3 and others, claiming he was honest and open in describing the Iranian position vis a vis maintaining its "right to development," which remains unchanged. The USG proposal, however, ignores the Iranian position, said Larijani. (Note: Bin Alawi's personal observation at this point was that Larijani may fear acceptance of the USG offer, as currently formulated, would be seen as capitulation by the Iranian public. He added that the USG might need to add more to make the offer acceptable to Iran. End note.)

Iran Awaits Vienna Outcome Before Officially Responding

15. (C) Bin Alawi said he repeatedly urged Mottaki and Larijani to give the USG proposal "very serious consideration." "This is what you have been wanting all along," he reminded the Iranians. Larijani replied that Iran will likely wait until after the results of the June 1 Ministerial of the U.S., EU-3, Russia and China in Vienna before officially responding to the U.S. offer. Bin Alawi said he urged Larijani to accept the USG proposal, sit at the table, then negotiate to resolve whatever reservations the Iranians may have. That would give Tehran the opportunity to make its case directly on both the nuclear file and all other outstanding issues. "This is a big step for the Americans," he reminded Larijani.

Bin Alawi's Interpretation

16. (C) Bin Alawi told the Ambassador he was disappointed with Larijani and Mottaki's initial reactions. He speculated that Larijani's reaction may also be influenced by domestic political considerations, possibly fearing that President Ahmadinejad would use the USG proposal to "declare victory" in forcing the U.S. to the table, further boosting the populist leader's public standing at the personal expense of Larijani.

17. (C) Bin Alawi suggested that the USG consider putting a more positive spin on its offer to Iran during the Secretary's meetings in Vienna to further lure Iran into

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accepting the offer. He specifically suggested more "nuance" in the pre-condition concerning uranium enrichment. Asked by the Ambassador if he would continue pressuring Tehran to respond favorably, Bin Alawi said he was prepared to do so if there was further development on the USG offer. "Any way the U.S. can soften the conditions would help," he stated.

Omani Public Statement

18. (C) Responding to the Ambassador's urging for a public Omani statement of support for the USG proposal, Bin Alawi assured that an official statement would be forthcoming on June 1. Bin Alawi said the Omani statement would be "positive, but leave the door open to both sides." The Embassy will report the public statement septel.

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